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SUBJECT: Protests Over Price Increases Lead to Clashes

Ref: A) Khartoum 2007, B) Khartoum 2009

¶1. Summary: Protesters and police clashed on August 28 during a demonstration over recent price increases. Opposition parties plan to present a memorandum objecting to the price increases to President Bashir on Wednesday. The Council of Ministers has endorsed the action of the Minister of Finance in raising prices, but opposition parties are still seeking to debate the question in the National Assembly. End Summary.

Police Move on Protesters

¶2. The prices of sugar, gasoline and diesel fuel increased following a tax increase on sugar and reduction of subsidies for fuel (reftels). On August 28, the Sudan Forum, a new grouping of opposition parties, held a meeting at the University of Khartoum to protest the price increases. Those attending the meeting included leaders of the opposition parties such as Umma, DUP, Bathiest, Umma Reform and Renovation, Sudanese Congress Party, and the Communist Party, as well as University of Khartoum professors. Speakers at the meeting reportedly demanded that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy and Mining explain in the National Assembly why budget shortfalls occurred and why the price increases were implemented. Following the meeting, participants staged a demonstration in the street outside the meeting hall. Riot police using sticks and tear gas moved to disperse the demonstrators. Suliman El-Amin, Spokesman of the Sudan Forum, was reported to be seriously injured and was taken to hospital.

March Planned for Wednesday

¶3. According to local press sources, the leaders of the main opposition parties are planning a peaceful procession on the afternoon of Wednesday, August 30, to march to the Palace and hand over a 'memorandum' to the President explaining their rejection of the price increases.

¶4. On Sunday, August 27, the Council of Ministers gave its endorsement to the Minister of Finance's decision to raise prices. Opposition party leaders, including SPLM members of Parliament, are seeking to have the issue of price increases debated in the National Assembly. However, the National Assembly is currently in recess. The Council of Ministers' endorsement of the Minister of Finance's decision further reduces the possibility that the National Assembly debate could lead to a change in the decision to raise prices.

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